



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

## NYS Budget: Providing for New Yorkers in a Time of Crisis

SHELLEY B. MAYER April 7, 2020

| ISSUE: **FOUNDATION AID FUNDING, CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM, MEDICAID, UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

# 2020-2021 NYS BUDGET



Dear Friends:

My thoughts are with the over 5,400 New Yorkers we have lost due to the coronavirus and their families. These are particularly challenging times for these families saying goodbye to loved ones over video-chat and unable to be with each other while in mourning. We keep you in our thoughts during this crisis.

In the midst of this State of Emergency, my colleagues and I approved an on-time & balanced state budget for FY 2020-2021. This was not the budget we were hoping for at the start of the Legislative Session in January, but we did the best we could under the circumstances with the state facing a \$10+ billion budget gap due to the fiscal impact of the coronavirus.

The federal CARES Act provided much needed support to the state's education budget, and my colleagues and I were able to use these funds to prevent education funding cuts in the FY 2020-2021 NYS Budget. Every school district's Foundation Aid funding is the same as it was last year. We also adopted a paid sick leave policy for all workers with minimal impact on small businesses, increased funding for unemployment insurance, and partially rolled-back proposed Medicaid cuts. We also came to an agreement on modifications to criminal justice reforms and the state's use of bail by adding offenses to the existing pool of bail eligible offenses such as hate crime assaults, those accused of repeated serious property crimes, and sex trafficking. Below you can read more details about the FY 2020-2021 New York State Budget.

I am proud to serve as your State Senator and the Chair of the Senate Education Committee. I look forward to being back in Albany and continuing to fight for you and for our public schools. Thank you to Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, my leader, friend & fellow Westchester resident, who has been a principled, smart and compassionate Majority Leader during this tough time. Thank you also to Governor Andrew Cuomo for his vision, commitment and strength during very difficult times. We are fortunate to have both of them.

We are going through a transformative experience in our nation's history, and there's no doubt each of us is feeling the burden. I urge you to follow the science and listen to the regulations. Please continue to do your part and stay home, even though you might be feeling anxious and restless--it's the right thing to do.

Kind regards,

Shelley B. Mayer

## **NEW YORK STATE FY 2020-2021 BUDGET**

### **Protecting Public School Funding in the 2020-2021 NYS Budget**

Public education is the backbone of democracy, and every student, regardless of their zip code, deserves access to a quality education. My colleagues and I in the Senate Majority fought to restore proposed cuts and maintain funding for New York State schools and education programs, despite the catastrophic fiscal impact of the coronavirus on the state's revenues. With support of our federal partners and the CARES Act, the 2020-2021 State Budget includes:

- Every school district is held harmless in Foundation Aid and will receive the same amount as in 2019-20—a total state-wide investment of \$18.4 billion made possible by the federal CARES Act, the stimulus bill effort led by Senator Chuck Schumer and our NY delegation;
- \$10 million in new funding for student mental health support grants - our proposal to address persistent complaints about mental health issues;
- \$1 million for civics curriculum development about diversity and religious tolerance.

### **Protecting New Yorkers' Health and Health Care Services**

As we work to confront the coronavirus pandemic, it has never been more important that we protect health care resources and invest in quality medical services. We were able to roll back many of the originally proposed Medicaid cuts, although some of them were enacted, much to my dismay. The 2020-2021 State Budget includes:

- Expanding access to telehealth in the Medicaid program, so more New Yorkers can connect with their physical and mental health providers.
- Tobacco and vaping control regulations, including:
  - Prohibiting the retail sale of flavored vapor products, unless the product is approved by the Federal Food and Drug Administration through the premarket tobacco product application process;
  - Prohibiting the public display of tobacco products, electronic cigarettes, or vapor product advertisements near schools;
  - Increasing the general penalties for selling tobacco or vape products to minors;
  - Requiring disclosure of ingredients in vape products;
  - Regulating dangerous carrier oils that cause vaping illnesses; and
  - Creating a new education campaign regarding the dangers of vaping for school aged youth.
- Designating 13 fentanyl analogs to Schedule I controlled substances to get these drugs off the streets and protect New Yorkers.
- Authorizing the Department of Financial Services to investigate prescription drug price increases of over 50% and indications of fraud, and creating the Drug Accountability Board to participate in the investigations.
- Limiting out-of-pocket expenses for a 30 day supply of insulin to be capped at \$100.
- Establishing the Curing Alzheimer's Health Consortium within SUNY to identify genes that predict an increased risk for developing Alzheimer's.

## **Standing Up for Struggling New Yorkers**

Many community members are struggling due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and the economic downturn as businesses work to stay open and pay employees. To help New York taxpayers address this crisis, the 2020-2021 State Budget includes:

- \$200 million in additional support through the Child Care Development Block Grant to assist families affected by the public health emergency;
- \$1.05 billion increased funding for Unemployment Insurance (UI) Administration for anticipated increase of UI claims;
- Ensuring all New York employees have between five to seven days (40 to 56 hours, respectively) of sick leave.
- Expands prevailing wage requirements to private projects over \$5 million paid in whole or partially with public funds as well as projects where public funds make up at least 30 percent of the aggregated total costs, with certain exemptions.

### **Keeping New Yorkers Safe & Modifications to Criminal Justice Reforms**

The Senate Majority responded to community concerns about criminal justice and bail reforms by including additional felonies and some serious misdemeanors that are charged repeatedly in the list of offenses eligible for bail. This means that the judge has the discretion to determine if bail is appropriate to be set in some limited circumstances, and records will be kept regarding the judge's application of bail to ensure accountability. The 2020-2021 State Budget includes:

- Improvements to New York's bail law such as making several high level offenses now bail eligible including certain sex crimes, high level drug offenses, domestic violence felonies, crimes resulting in a death, and offenses directly related to an individual's flight risk. The

reform proposal also:

- Creates a mechanism to address individuals who repeatedly commit crimes involving damage to property or persons;
  - Expands reporting requirements so that the Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Office of Court Administration can better track outcomes of the state's new bail law; and
  - Maintains the existing bail structure where almost misdemeanors and non-violent felonies are not bail eligible.
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- Providing \$40 million to support the implementation of discovery reforms.
  - Barring gun ownership for individuals who commit serious offenses in other states.
  - Empowering law enforcement to seize weapons for at least 48 hours when responding to domestic violence incidents. Law enforcement will be authorized to seize firearms that are in plain view when conducting a lawful search in responding to a domestic violence incident.
  - Keeping guns out of the hands of domestic abusers by ensuring District Attorneys follow current practices and Court Clerks promptly provide information on misdemeanor domestic violence convictions to the State Department of Criminal Justice Services to ensure these offenses are easier to identify on a criminal record for gun background checks.
  - The enacted budget establishes two degrees of Domestic Act of Terrorism Motivated by Hate and establishes a Domestic Terrorism Task Force.

In summary, I can't think of a more challenging time for our state and our nation in recent memory. I am motivated every day to serve our communities as effectively as possible. At the same time, I know we have more work to do in Albany, which I am hopeful we will

continue to do. I am focused on pressing our federal representatives, Congressmembers Eliot Engel and Nita Lowey, as well as our Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, for the help we need for every aspect of our community and our economy.